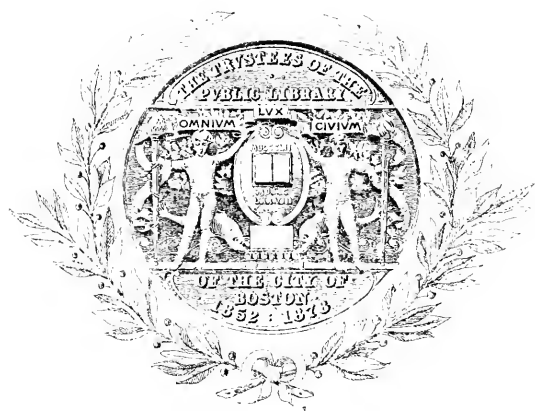


No 4425.330



13

THE HOME
OF THE
ANCIENT DEAD RESTORED.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT ATHOL, MASS., JULY 4, 1859.

BY

REV. JOHN F. NORTON.

AT THE

Re-consecration of the Ancient Cemetery of Athol, and
the Erection of a Monument thereon.

WITH A REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE DAY.

ATHOL DEPOT:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY RUFUS PUTNAM.

1859.

THE HOME
OF THE
ANCIENT DEAD RESTORED.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT ATHOL, MASS., JULY 4, 1859,

BY

REV. JOHN F. NORTON,

AT THE

Re-consecration of the Ancient Cemetery of Athol, and
the erection of a Monument thereon.

WITH A REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE DAY.

ATHOL DÉPÔT: 1859

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY RUFUS PUTNAM.

1859

REV. JOHN F. NORTON :

DEAR SIR :

The citizens of Athol who had the pleasure of hearing your address at the re-consecration of the ancient Cemetery of the town, on the 4th inst., desire its publication ; and have instructed me by unanimous vote to request of you a copy for this purpose. They feel that a production which presents in attractive form so many interesting facts in our early history as a town—embracing vivid descriptions both of character and event—and connecting us so intimately with the storied, yet scarcely remembered Past, cannot be too highly estimated. And concurring entirely in these sentiments of my fellow-townsmen, I beg leave to communicate to you their wishes in this regard, and respectfully solicit a compliance therewith.

Yours Truly,

CHAS. FIELD.

Athol, July 18, 1859.

HON. CHARLES FIELD :

MY DEAR SIR :

The Address, a copy of which you ask, in behalf of our fellow-townsmen for publication, was prepared amid an unusual pressure of other duties, but since it was received with so much favor by yourself and by those whom you represent, I place it at your disposal.

I may be permitted to suggest the propriety of publishing with my address a brief history of the enterprise which led to its preparation and a report of the other deeply interesting proceedings of the day.

Truly Yours,

JOHN F. NORTON.

Athol, July 20, 1859.

The Town of Athol, Worcester County, Mass., which originally bore the Indian name of PEQUOLAG, was settled in the year 1735. The early dead of this settlement were interred in what is now known as the "Old Burying Ground," which is about sixty rods southeast of the present Railway Station. Nearly one hundred years having elapsed since interments ceased in that place, and a dense forest having covered it, the spot was known by comparatively few of the present generation, till the attention of the Town was directed to the propriety of rescuing the place from utter forgetfulness.

At a Town Meeting holden Nov. 2, 1858, a committee of which MR. GEORGE SPRAGUE was chairman, was raised and instructed to ascertain upon what terms a lot embracing all the graves that can now be traced, might be procured; and to report the same to the Town with estimates for fencing, erecting a suitable Monument, &c.

This Committee reported in April, 1859, that a lot of suitable dimensions would be given to the Town by its present owners, Mr. Ethan Lord and Mr. Amos L. Cheney, on condition that it should be properly fenced and a Monument erected thereon, and recommended that an appropriation be made for this purpose.

This Report was adopted and the requisite appropriation was made.

At the same meeting Col. Thomas Townsend, George Sprague and Amos L. Cheney were appointed a Committee to carry into effect the above named resolution. These gen-

tleman obtained, in behalf of the Town, the legal title to a lot eight rods long and four rods wide, which embraces all the graves that can now be distinguished, fenced the same and procured a granite Monument of suitable size and suitably inscribed, to be erected in the centre of the lot. They then proposed that the ground be re-consecrated and the Monument be erected with appropriate religious services on the coming Anniversary of our National Independence, July 4, 1859.

This proposition was seconded by the citizens of Athol, and committees were appointed to co-operate with the Committee of the Town in carrying into effect this wise proposal.

At subsequent meetings of the committees, the following individuals were chosen as officers of the day:

HON. CHARLES FIELD, *President*.

Lyman W. Hapgood, Esq., *Vice President*.

Col. Thomas Townsend, *Chief Marshal*.

Rev. J. F. Norton was invited to deliver the Address.

On the morning of the day above named, a large concourse of citizens and strangers assembled on the grounds of the High School House, when a procession was formed headed by the pupils of the High School and led by the Athol Brass Band. The children of the other schools followed with distinctive badges; then the Committees, Officers of the day, Clergy and citizens in general; and the whole proceeded to the "Old Burying Ground." The assembly was called to order by the Chief Marshal, Col. Townsend, who called upon F. F. Fay, Esq., to read the proceedings of the meetings of the citizens of which he had been the Clerk, and of the Committees that had resulted in the present gathering. After this was done, Col. Townsend, as chairman of the committee of the town, spoke as follows:

THE MARSHAL'S SPEECH.

One hundred and fifteen years after the landing of the

Pilgrims upon Plymouth Rock, five men, viz: Richard Morton, Ephraim Smith, Samuel Morton, John Smeed and Joseph Lord, with their wives and children, started from Hatfield for this region. All their furniture, clothing and provisions they carried upon their backs, and guided by marked trees, arrived in the wilderness of Pequoig one hundred and twenty-four years ago. They were then nearly fifteen miles from any other English settlement, but undismayed, they erected at once their log cabins which they shingled with hemlock bark, and laid the foundations for our prosperity. Where, O, where are they now? Go ask those head-stones the names of the pious sleepers, and they answer not. Go ask those tall, majestic pines* that witnessed the opening of these graves, the tears that were there shed, and the heart-rending sighs that were uttered, and the only response they give is the mournful dirge of the wind as it passes through their branches.

The Plymouth Rock has its Anniversary; this day which is the birth-day of our National freedom, is a glorious Anniversary, and certainly it is becoming and proper that we should assemble on this spot to-day to preserve and perpetuate the noble virtues of the first settlers of Pequoig.

The boundaries of Pequoig were not the same as the boundaries of Athol, for the northwest corner of the former was a few rods south of North Orange meeting-house, the northeast corner was northeast of South Royalston meeting-house, while the southeast corner was south of Phillipston meeting house, the whole making a town six miles square. This was the first Burying Ground of Pequoig, and the dead were interred here from the four quarters of the settlement, being borne upon a rude bier which was carried upon the shoulders of men. These processions were guided by marked trees; and as unfriendly Indians abounded in this vicinity, all that could carried their muskets for protection. I

*Two of these pines measure eleven feet each in circumference.

have these facts from my grandmother who received them from the pious actors in the drama.

I have now a promise to fulfil. A youth is present, who while participating in the labor of clearing the rubbish from this plot of ground, remarked he wished he could know the name of the child that slept in yonder little grave. I asked him if he should be present on the day of the re-consecration? He replied "Yes Sir," when I promised him, I would then tell him what children and parents were buried here.

North-west from this spot in the vicinity of Benj. Harwood's, stands a tall elm tree, which you may regard as a monument to perpetuate the memory of the Fort that was erected in that vicinity. There were two or three others within the bounds of the settlement, and in these the mothers and the children congregated when the Indians were abroad. In the day-time, hour after hour, these mothers would sit by the side of the Fort, with their small children in their arms and the larger children clinging to them for dear life, expecting every moment that the savages would assail them and carry away their scalps all reeking with blood. These were the mothers and these the children who were buried here. The fathers and the sons cleared away the forests and planted their corn, protected sometimes by their guns which were in the hands of their wives and mothers; and it is one of the objects of this gathering to make, if possible, a lasting impression upon the minds of the youth and children of this assembly respecting the trials and perils of the young in the early days of Athol. Then it was necessary to build strong enclosures to keep the cattle from being stolen by the Indians or devoured by the catamounts, bears and wolves; and the children then were obliged to watch the cows, calves, sheep and lambs by day, and often to mourn over the destruction of some pet animal as they came out from their hiding places in the morning.

Other things I might say did time permit. Go to the Town Clerk's office and read the votes passed by the first

settlers of Pequig and their descendants in the days of the American Revolution. They acted as if the cause of American Independence rested wholly upon their shoulders. See them furnishing the necessaries of life to the families of those who had gone out to battle, for Athol did nobly to keep up and strengthen the spirit that pervaded every town and hamlet in New England.

But I must close. Had I the eloquence of an Everett, or the ability of a Webster, I could hardly do justice to the virtuous deeds of the first settlers of Pequig and their children, and I leave the other duties of this occasion to abler hands than mine. I now call upon the officers of the day to conduct our future proceedings.

Prayer was then offered by Rev. Lysander Fay, when after "The Plymouth Rock" had been sung by the Athol Glee Club, the President of the Day spoke as follows :

MR. FIELD'S REMARKS.*

We have come together to-day to perform a grateful duty ; to erect a monument to the memory of the first settlers of Pequig, and to rescue from neglect and forgetfulness, the place where they repose. And we come to the performance of this duty as a town ; represented here by the inmates of its numerous and happy homes, whose presence on this occasion is itself a benediction.

More than a century has elapsed since this ground, consecrated by the tears of mourners and by affections that never die, was set apart as a burial place, and these "narrow cells" were opened to receive the forms of the loved ; and although in our midst—scarcely an arrow's flight from our dwellings—and hallowed by all that is beautiful and enduring in association, it has lain for long years unenclosed, unvisited and almost unknown.

*It was with great reluctance and after much solicitation that Mr. Field consented to have his remarks published.—PUBLISHER.

A few years more and we should have sought in vain for the place where

“The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.”

A few years more and all traces of this ancient cemetery would have been obliterated ; and the charm which still lingers around it, like the Angel at the Sepulchre, would have forsaken it forever!

These old, sunken graves, and these rude unlettered headstones—what tales they tell !—and how touchingly they speak of the dead ! What memories they awaken—what histories call up ! Every tree, and leaf, and flower, and the brook, whose shimmering light and murmuring song entrance the eye and ear, whisper to us, in this secluded and beautiful spot, of the departed, of their sufferings, their trials, their virtues ; while the tear rises unbidden to the eye, and the heart beats with responsive emotion ! And yet, we come here not altogether in sadness, but rather in joy, that we are permitted to pay this tribute of respect and affection, and participate in a commemoration, whose remembrance will be more acceptable than sacrifice, and more grateful than incense.

As a fitting time for this commemoration and these observances, the Committee has selected the Anniversary of our National Independence—a selection, it seems to me, of peculiar propriety. For they, by whose graves we stand, and to whose memory we raise this mute but eloquent shaft, were of that race and mould of men, who proclaimed to the world the sublime truth that “all men are created free and equal ;” kindred to the bold spirits of the Revolution who did all, and dared all, to lay broad and deep the cornerstone of Liberty ; the blood of whose sons reddened the battle-fields of their country ; and who themselves watched and prayed, and toiled and fasted with their guns by their side.

“ And these were they who gave us birth,
The Pilgrims of the sun-set wave ;
Who won for us this virgin earth,
And freedom with the soil they gave.”

The singing of the Hymn, "The Nameless Grave," followed.

"Walk gently o'er that nameless grave,
No weeping eye hath blest;
For he who sleeps within hath now
A calm and holy rest.
Ye knew him not—he walked amid
Your pressed and peopled way;
Unheralded and unacclaimed,
Nor marked by proud array.

Ye saw him—yet he mused not,
He was not decked in gold;
That costly drapery did not throw,
Round him its purple fold.
Ye asked him not his name or race,
Nor questioned whence he came;
While proudly rose o'er distant hills
His household altar flame.

Have ye not learned the Great One meek,
And void of high pretense?
Go look upon that nameless grave,
And learn the lesson thence;
For he who slumbers there, in life
Than they was more caressed,
Whom sculptured urn or towering shaft,
And epitaph have blest.

The President now introduced Rev. Mr. Norton who gave the following address:

MR. NORTON'S ADDRESS.

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

There are times, places and circumstances that speak with more than mortal power, that plead with more than human eloquence, that are invested under God's over-ruling providence, with a degree of seriousness and interest that stir the deepest fountains of feeling in our bosoms. Is not the present such a moment? Is not the spot upon which we have assembled such a place? And are not all the facts connected with this gathering so many circumstances of intense interest, that cannot be contemplated without touching the chords of sympathy in every heart, without awakening in every pious and philanthropic soul the profoundest emotions?

Impressed with the belief that whatever may be true of

it at other times, the moral pulse of this vast assemblage beats at this moment in unison with my own, I could wish to reverently uncover and bow my head with yours on this solemn occasion and listen with you to the teachings of this ground upon which we tread, of these trees that wave in glory their branches over us, of this beautiful stream that has been for generations one of the guardians of this sacred spot, of these mounds and rough stones that mark the narrow homes of the dead, and of this day of days that greets us with its smiles and carries us back to the modest virtues, bitter trials and stern conflicts of our fathers. And these shall be our instructors on this occasion; for all I shall attempt will be to express in words a few of the great truths that they silently but impressively proclaim.

As already intimated,

THE PLACE OF ASSEMBLING

Is remarkable, and in itself, a teacher of profound wisdom. Never before in this part of our Commonwealth and probably in no other part did a multitude like this meet together upon such a spot. for the ground upon which we tread to-day has peculiar attractions, associations and lessons of its own, that render it unusually sacred.

This is the burial place not wholly of the *Unknown*, but of the *Undistinguished Dead*. These mounds and stones over which this forest waves, mark the receptacle of the mortal remains of men, women and children; but we never saw them; few of our fathers and mothers ever saw them; and with the exception of a small number their names are lost, for these rough stones bear no inscription, and here the tongue of tradition is silent. A man or a woman, probably a father or a mother or else a young man or a maiden was buried here, for you see the grave is full six feet in length, but upon all beyond oblivion rests; and we stand to-day among the *Undistinguished Dead*. And yet this spot has its history, and each of these graves has its his-

tory. Tradition and early records give us some correct idea of the former, while our own experience aided by imagination is able to unroll before our wondering eyes the sacred leaves of the latter. In 1741, eight acres of ground including the spot upon which we are now assembled, were set apart by the Proprietors of Pequig "To Lyce in common, for a Burying Place and a meeting house place, if the Proprietors shall think proper to put them too." There is a tradition that a part of this lot was set apart for a parade ground.

Who was first buried here we know not, as we know not when the first grave was opened, but since the settlement commenced in 1735, the probability is, that it was sacred ground prior to the action just alluded to in 1741.

How many were buried here is also uncertain. Only forty graves can now be distinctly traced, but the probability is that more than this number have been obliterated by the ploughshare and harrow.

Records are in existence which assert that Robert Oliver and William Oliver were buried here, while here was the resting place of five children of Mr. Ephraim Stockwell aged nine years; six months; four months; four years; two years. These were buried between 1769 and 1776, and yonder are five graves of children answering in length to the ages just given; so that it is nearly certain that there repose the mortal remains of the children of Mr. Stockwell who was the grandfather of our townsman Mr. Geo. Sprague. Our townsman, Capt. Benj. Twichell, assures me that two of his uncles, Joseph and David Twichell were likewise buried here. Tradition also asserts that of the early settlers, the Mortons, the Graves and the Nutts were interred in this ground. When one of a family was buried here, this ground seems to have been used as a family burying ground for a considerable time after other cemeteries were opened.

Tradition also asserts that the last person whose mortal remains were committed to this ground was Samuel Fairbanks, who died June 3, 1777.

Such is the history of the spot, that now, by the generosity of Ethan Lord and Amos L. Cheney, its late owners, has been secured forever as the quiet resting place of the remains of the ancient dead of Athol.

I have said that each of these graves has its *history*. Every grave has this and usually it is written in tears. Go back with me one hundred and twenty years, and let us visit together this spot. Death two days since entered the ranks of the first settlers of Pequig, and the beloved wife and fond mother was the victim. Long and resolutely did she struggle against the conviction of danger, and all was done that could be done to save her. The sympathy of every individual in the settlement was aroused, and daily prayer went up from every log house for her recovery ; but she is dead ; and to-day a new grave is to receive its sacred deposit. It is opened *there*, and you stand with me by its side waiting for the arrival of the corpse and the band of mourners. Presently they approach through the thicket yonder, four strong men bearing the rude coffin. An armed escort precedes them for there is no safety in traversing the region around, even with the remains of the dead for burial, unless a company of men with loaded muskets lead the way. The husband follows and then the children. Next comes the remaining men with the women and children of the settlement, for all are mourners. A few wild flowers have been plucked by the hands of kindness, and they rest upon the quiet bosom of the sleeper. The last look is taken by the fond husband and loving children, and all weep, as the precious dust descends into its narrow house. O the agony of that moment when the conviction comes that all is done, that she is dead and buried ! But God is near to strengthen and comfort, and you see the mourning band retire, to weep indeed but still to gird themselves anew for duty.

“ Arrived at home how now they gaze around
In every place where she no more is found.
The seat at table she was wont to fill,

The fire-side chair still set, but vacant still,
 The garden walks, a labor all her own.
 The lattice bower, with trailing shrubs o'ergrown,
 The Sunday seat, she filled with all her race,
 Each place of hers is now a sacred place."

The precious remains rest here in hope: and often does the sad husband and father, often do the loving children repair to this spot to mingle together their tears, and to form new and high resolutions for the future. Especially between the services of the Lord's Day in his House, this ground is visited by the serious and thoughtful, for meditation here is the Sabbath School instruction of the first settlers of Pequig. And then these graves of children around which you assemble to-day, each has a touching history: you, fathers and mothers, know how touching, if God has bereaved you of your little ones. Who stood in tears over these we know not, but each was closed with grief not unlike in intensity, though not in origin, that of David when he cried, "O Absalom, my son, my son! Would God I had died for thee!" And can we tread this holy ground to-day without recalling in imagination the deeply affecting scenes that have here been witnessed? Every humane heart beats in sympathy with human sorrow wherever it is experienced: and Heaven will not frown if we weep to-day for the dead of past generations.

THE DAY OF OUR ASSEMBLING

Increases the interest of this occasion. This is the birthday of our countrys' liberties, Freedom's Anniversary: and I have not a particle of sympathy with the piety or the philanthropy that cannot greet its dawning light with rejoicing. The work of our fathers which this day commemorates was indeed imperfect, and it would not have been human had it been otherwise; but it was, after all, one of the grandest works that was ever accomplished; and may my right hand forget her cunning before I shall cease to remember with gratitude, the toils, the sacrifices, the sorrows and the tri-

umphs of the American Revolution. But did you ever think how much we owe to causes that were set in operation long before 1776? Did you ever consider how that struggle would have been fruitless had it not been for the peculiar character of some of the events that preceded it? The foundation stones of the Temple of Freedom were laid very early, yes, generations before the yoke of oppression was broken, and the birth of human liberty was proclaimed and borne on the wings of the wind to gladden the hearts of the down trodden nations. The Puritan movements in England and Holland; the perilous voyage of the May Flower; the toils and privations, the dangers, the faith and deliverances of the Pilgrims; the opening upon these hills and along these valleys of the ancient forests; the founding of schools and churches and the cultivation here of the noblest virtues that adorn and bless humanity, and this, under circumstances the most unpropitious; these things, and such as these prepared the way for Freedom; indeed they are the corner stones of this glorious edifice. The spirit of the men and women that entered this wilderness and converted it into a fruitful field, their honesty of purpose, their firm resolve, their enlarged views, their sound judgment, their readiness to sacrifice self for the common good, their high moral courage, their faith in God, these, these made the Declaration of July 4, 1776, the Charter of Freedom; these saved our land from being, in that day of darkness, the prey of civil factions and the victim of foreign oppression. All history sacred and profane, and all true philosophy warrant this assertion and therefore render it suitable and proper for me to connect this ancient home of the dead with the day upon which we have assembled. The men and women who were buried here, were *patriots*, intelligent, courageous and warm friends of their country. Those were perilous days when the first settlers of Pequign began to cut away the ancient forests and open this virgin soil to the light of heaven; for the meadows along our noble river were frequented by

Indian tribes that feared and hated the white man. Individuals are now before me, who remember the remains of the forts then erected for the protection of the settlers. Upon the street near the house of Mrs. Betsey Humphrey, was one of these; there where the village hotel now stands, we suppose was another, while on yonder hill was the third; and in each of these, night after night, an anxious, often a sleepless company was assembled for mutual comfort and protection. Eleven years had elapsed from the settlement before the first victim fell, and yonder hill was the scene of the tragedy. Ezekiel Wallingford, contrary, it is said, to the advice of his friends, ventured one night from that fort to protect his cornfield, as he supposed from the bears, when a ball from the gun of an Indian fractured his thigh and he was quickly dispatched by the murderous tomahawk. Other scenes scarcely less tragic followed, for the enemy was crafty and merciless, and there was no security for the whites till the red tribes had melted away and disappeared before the onward march of civilization. No records of acts of injustice towards the Indians, so far as I know, tarnish the good name of the first settlers of Pequign, but notwithstanding this, their lives were daily and hourly in peril, and they found but little rest, till one by one, they were borne by their companions to this home of the dead.

The part which the people of this place performed amid the stirring events of the Revolution, many of you know, was greatly to their credit. As early as 1770, the coming strife was foreseen, and measures to meet it in the spirit of freedom, began to be inaugurated. July 7, 1774, the inhabitants of this town entered into "a solemn league or covenant," without a dissenting voice, to cripple the power of Great Britain by the non-consumption of her articles of manufacture and trade. Fifty days later, seven patriotic resolutions were unanimously passed.

The 1st of these points to a closer and firmer bond of union between the colonies.

The 2d acknowledges the loyalty of the people to King George the Third, so long, but only so long as he shall govern according to the English Constitution, and the chartered rights of the people.

The 3d condemns the blockade and plunder of Boston.

The 4th complains of the injustice involved in the practical repeal of the charters of the colonies.

The 5th is a pledge of resistance to the unjust measures pursued by the British Government.

The 6th provides for a representation in a county meeting that was soon to be holden at Worcester.

The 7th is as follows: "Resolved, That if any person shall accept any commission or post of office to serve under the new Establishment, (that is, British regulations then going into force,) he ought to be looked upon and treated as an enemy to his country: as he thereby is joining with, and lending a helping hand to those who are endeavoring to enslave us."

The seventh Resolve just read, shows how exceedingly jealous the people of Athol were with reference to what were then called Tory influences. *Upon the west side of the street south of the house of Lucius B. Simonds, near a barn now standing, you will find the remains of a dwelling-house. That was the ancient tavern of Athol; and it was kept in the revolutionary times by a gentleman of the name of Ward. He and his family, tradition asserts, were suspected, whether justly or not, I cannot say, of too much loyalty to their Sovereign across the ocean; and so a guard was stationed upon the road leading from near this spot to the tavern, and also upon the causeway east of the tavern, for then the road from the street to Boston passed from the tavern east across the swamp now covered by the mill pond of Mr. Edwin Ellis. The object of this guard was to discover, if possible, whether there was any communication be-

*This anecdote having been given substantially by Col. Townsend in his opening remarks, was omitted in the delivery of the address.

tween the Ward family and the enemy. That any discovery was made we have no information; but the whole goes to show how jealous, three generations ago, Athol was of civil liberty. May this jealousy never be less.

Then came the enlisting of a company of soldiers and the provision for their pay; and I hold in my hands an ancient document which will throw light upon the scenes that followed. Here are the marching orders that were sent to an Athol Captain, which will explain themselves.

TO CAPT. EPHM STOCKWELL.

SIR:—By virtue of an express from Gen'l Warner in which i am Directed to detach Every Sixth man out of my Regiment to go to the releaf of our Distressed Breatheren at the westward,

I do Hearby Direct and Order you forth-with with-out the Least Delay and with the utmost Despatch to Detach Every Sixth man out of the Training Band and alarm List of your Company for the purpose affores'd and See that they are acquipt according to Law with armes ammunition also with Kittles and Cooking utensils. The Selectmen are Directed to acquip those that are not acquiped, you are also to Detach one Corporal. And when you have so Done you are to march them to Petersham on monday the Twenty Eight day of this Instant July to meet on the Paraid near the Meeting House in said Town at nine o'clock in the forenoon, you are also to take the command of the men Detached from captains Nye, Henery and Lord's Companey's Together with your own Detachment. And from sd. Petersham you are to make your Route By the way of Bennington where you are to receive further orders from Colo. Cushing, you are to Return me a List of the names of those men Detached from your Company Immediately.

Barre July 26th 1777.

NATHAN SPARHAWK, Col.

This document was kindly furnished me by Mr. George

Sprague who is a grandson of Capt. Stockwell. The history of this military company is intensely interesting. Its Lieutenant was Benj. Townsend, grandfather of Col. Thomas Townsend, our Chief Marshal to-day. This Company was in the Battle of Bennington and afterward captured in New Jersey, a British detachment, one less in number, without firing a shot. In the terrible conflict of White Plains two of its men were killed, who bore the Athol names of Morse and Goddard. The first Pastor of Athol, Rev. James Humphrey has left this record respecting them. "Mr. Earl Cutting, their townsman and messmate, was between them when they fell." Tradition adds that one of them, when wounded, leaped over a fence and died without uttering a word.

Thirty pounds sterling were offered by the town to each man who would enlist for three years; and as the war progressed, great quantities of food and clothing were furnished by this town for the suffering armies of Freedom. All was generous, all was noble, all was patriotic, as the blessings we enjoy testify; but in our admiration of the spirited men and women that made Athol what it was in 1776, let us not forget the virtues of the generation that preceded them; the strong common sense, the courage, the lofty aims and unwavering faith in God that characterized their fathers and mothers, whose dust is mingled with the earth beneath us.

THE OBJECT OF OUR ASSEMBLING

Also gives interest to the present occasion. This beautiful and sacred spot, this ancient home of the dead, has been long neglected, but not through the fault of its late owners. It came into their possession with the other parts of their estates adjoining, and most gladly do we acknowledge their generosity in the gift that secures for all time to come this plot of ground to the sacred purpose of its original consecration. What ceremonies were here performed when the first grave was opened under your feet, I have no means of knowing;

perhaps the sighs and tears and silent prayer to God of some bereaved husband, some heart stricken wife or some childless father and mother, constituted the whole. Be this as it may, the place has been consecrated, and we stand, my friends, upon holy ground. Perhaps no act of ours can render this spot more sacred; but as we come here to-day to do all in our power to make amends for the neglect of the past, by erecting, at the expense of the town and under the supervision of their Agents this Granite Shaft "Sacred to the memory of the First Settlers of Pequoig" the unknown dead who here were buried, you will all admit the propriety of the *re-consecration* which we now make. The Committee of the Town of Athol, Thomas Townsend, George Sprague and Amos L. Cheney, having procured for their constituents the legal title to this plot of ground, do now in the presence of this assembly commit the same to Nathaniel Richardson, Calvin Kelton and John Kendall, the Selectmen and to James I. Goulding the Clerk of Athol, to be transmitted by them to their successors, that all men may know that this land is restored and re-appropriated as *a burial place*, as the quiet home of the dead. [The deed was here passed by Col. Thomas Townsend to Calvin Kelton, Esq., who received the same and committed it to James I. Goulding, in the presence of the assembled multitude.] This act having been performed, we say to the inhabitants of Athol assembled this day for this unusual purpose, this ground is yours, so long as you comply with the conditions annexed to their deed by the donors thereof, so long as your care shall keep it suitably fenced and preserve the Monument this day erected. And we would have you feel that this is a sacred deposit which you are bound to defend and hand down to your children not only intact but still more beautified. Suitable care and labor will render this the most attractive spot in this town that is so celebrated for its charming scenery; and in the name of this Committee and these guardians of our civil and social interests, I

call upon every Athol man, woman and child, to regard yourself as pledged to carry out to the full the happy design of this re-consecration. Ye who are now the pillars of society bearing the burden and heat of the day, I charge you in the name of the aged before me, and in the name of humanity also, preserve this spot and transmit it to your children, adorned by a refined taste, and if it may be, by still other monuments of art. And to the young in this vast assemblage, I would say, you have an interest here, that we trust you will never be disposed to overlook. Soon we, your fathers and mothers, shall pass away, and this sacred spot will be in your keeping. The impressive scenes of this hour you will never forget and we charge you to tell them to the generations that shall at length succeed to your privileges and responsibilities. Concert of action on your part, my young friends, will greatly increase the value of this legacy which it is our purpose to leave you; and may I be permitted to express the hope that as years shall come and go, these stately trees shall still adorn this spot, and that rare shrubs and blooming flowers shall serve to render this scene still more pleasant to the eye, yea, one of surpassing loveliness. I know of no other town that has such a place to watch over and beautify; and in the name of civilization, patriotism and religion, in the name of the dead who were here gathered to their fathers, I charge you, children and youth of Athol, make this place your care. Hallowed associations cluster here; come to this spot with a reverent regard for the manly virtues and noble deeds of the men and women that were buried here; and as you shall stand upon this holy ground, may kind Heaven strengthen you, to deal justly with the past and to meet with a becoming spirit all the responsibilities of the present and the future.

To one or two of the solemn lessons of this place and hour I may be permitted for a few moments to advert, in bringing my remarks to a close.

The fading nature of all things earthly. this scene is well

calculated to impress upon our minds : for the earnest, the gifted and the good were buried here, and now after a little more than a century has passed their graves we cannot distinguish and most of their names are forgotten. It is so substantially the world over. Within the memory of many before me one hundred thousand people of the French nation in the darkest days of her existence followed the remains of a noted military commander to their quiet resting place in that most beautiful and, I may add, gorgeous cemetery Pere La Chaise, and two millions united in the memorial that perpetuates his worth, but how few of this assemblage ever knew that France had a Gen. Foy to love and idolize ! And as it has been in the past and is now, so it will be in the future ; time will obliterate from earth the memory of honored names and great exploits, but the deeds of the self-denying and good are all recorded in Heaven : and that record, like the treasures of the holy, the moth shall not corrupt, and thieves shall not steal.

This scene and hour remind us of *our obligations to the manly virtues of the generations that have preceded us* ; for the foundations of our prosperity were laid in the courage, self-sacrifice and noble endurance of the first settlers of Pequoig. Their industry, honesty and piety gave tone to the intellectual and moral pulse of this community as it has been beating for more than four generations ; and we to-day would do something to show our gratitude, to let the world know that in the eager pursuit of wealth and honor, we are not so selfish as to be insensible to the obligations that have been laid upon us by the heroism and virtue of former days. This monument shall tell to our contemporaries and to those who shall come after us that the memory of those into whose labor we have entered is precious in our sight ; and as generation after generation shall come up to this sacred spot, they shall learn that the men, women and children of Athol, in the year of our Lord 1859, would do justice to the past : that they esteemed this birth-day of Freedom

honored by associating it with the memories of the hardy and honest pioneers of civilization and christianity, along the beautiful banks of the Pequig. And the stranger that shall visit this consecrated place, shall learn the same lesson and go away with a firmer love for his country and a holier zeal for duty, and so our act shall live and bless the world long after these tongues shall be silent in death.

My friends, I have done; and all that remains to perfect the work of the hour, other hands will accomplish. The longer I gaze upon it the scene before me becomes more and more impressive; for here the past, the present, and the future seem wonderfully, I may say almost supernaturally, combined. Another such scene, neither you nor I will ever behold; and I bid you look and think till the whole shall be daguerreotypied in fadeless colors and with imperishable distinctness upon your memories. And then I charge you to tell the story of this day to your children and children's children, and to enjoin it upon them to repeat it to the generations following; that age after age may honor the memory of the men and women, who, amid privation and peril, turned this wilderness into a fruitful field, and here in the heart of the primeval forest, erected and consecrated their first Temple to God.

The Band now played a funeral dirge, when F. F. Fay, Esq. read a list of the articles to be deposited in the cavity of the Monument, as follows:

Rev. S. F. Clarke's Centennial Discourse, 1850.

Rev. J. F. Norton's Address just given, in manuscript.

The Athol Directory and Advertiser for 1858.

The Valuation of Athol, 1856.

Athol School Reports for 1858 and 1859. Also,

The records of the meetings of the citizens and committees with reference to the Re-consecration of the Old Burying Ground, and the erection of the Monument; the whole comprising more than three hundred pages of printed mat-

ter, and about twenty-five pages in manuscript. These were then inserted in a glass jar which was carefully sealed. The deposit in the shaft was made at the request of the chairman of the Committee of the town, by the oldest Athol citizen present, Mr. Moses Chase, aged 88. The cavity was now sealed, and under the direction of J. S. Drury, an Athol citizen, who wrought the Monument from Athol Granite, the shaft was placed in position. This was done by hundreds of the children and youth of Athol, a long rope having been attached to the monument for this purpose. Some of these children may have the privilege of examining the contents of this shaft, when in future years they shall have become the "Fathers of the Town." The Band now played "Hail Columbia."

The Monument is a beautiful specimen of Athol work, the lettering having been in like manner, executed by Mr. Enoch T. Lewis of the Athol Marble Works. The shaft is eighteen inches square at the base, twelve at the top, and seven feet in height. The base is twenty-eight inches square and eighteen inches in thickness.

The inscriptions upon the Monument are as follows :

Upon the front, "Sacred to the Memory of the First Settlers of Pequign, 1735."

On the reverse, "Erected by the Inhabitants of Athol, July 4, 1859.

On the right, "The First Church organized 1750."

On the left, "The First Meeting House in Athol was erected a few rods north-east of this spot, and was burned by the Indians."

Short addresses followed from Mr. H. W. Carter, Dr. G. D. Colony, Rev. Mr. Hambleton, Rev. Mr. Bradburn of Boston, G. H. Hoyt, Esq., James Oliver, Jr., of the 7th generation from one of the first settlers, Mr. Henry H. Sprague, Mr. J. D. Miller and Mr. Wm. La Roy Haven, the last three of the High School.

The closing prayer was offered by Rev. A. Harding who

seemed almost overpowered by his interest in the occasion. "Old Hundred" was then sung by the great congregation. The Benediction by Rev. Mr. Harding closed the exercises.

Allusion is made in these addresses that are now given to the public, to the perils of the First Settlers of Athol arising from the jealousy and cruelty of the Indians; and it may be proper to remark that the rich meadows upon the banks of the Pequog in this town were a favorite haunt of the red tribes for a considerable period after they had deserted the neighboring regions. Here were their corn lands, that were unusually productive; and the place was, moreover, easy of access, being upon the Indian high road from the south-eastern sections of New England to the Canadas. There were two Indian crossings of the Pequog within the limits of this town, one a little above Lewis' Bridge and the other not far from the house of James Lamb. The remains of these are still to be seen. Mrs. Mary Rowlandson of Lancaster, (the death of whose daughter Grace is said to have given the name to Mt. Grace in Warwick) was taken captive by the Indians in Lancaster, Feb. 10, 1675. She was brought to this place as it appears from her narrative, and here crossed the "Payquage" or the "Bacquag" River upon a kind of raft constructed by her captors. And it is understood that the breaking up of this favorite haunt, where some of the most cruel and perfidious Indian tribes congregated, was one of the objects of the Colonial Government in the votes that were passed in 1732 with reference to the settlement of this region.



BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY



3 9999 06561 266 3

